

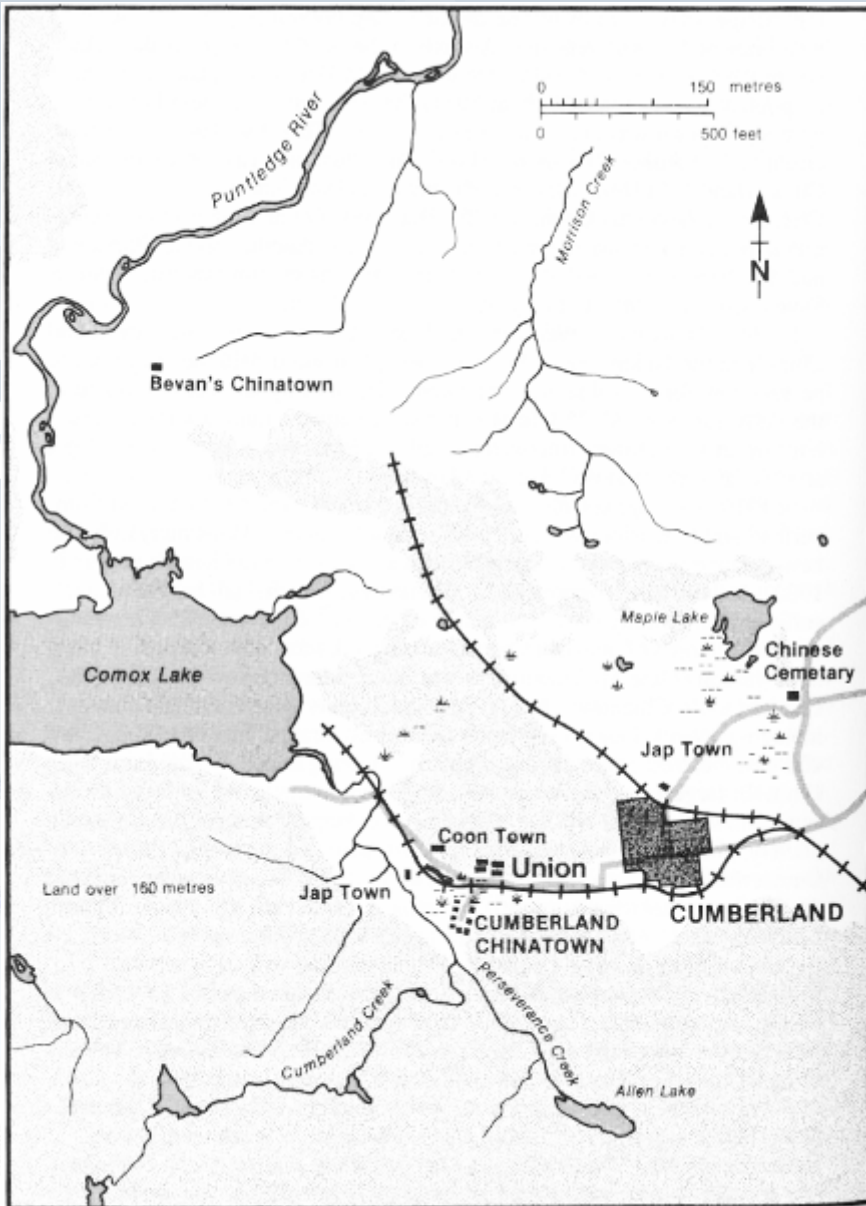
Cumberland Chinatown: Place of Origin and Canadian Identity

Imogene L. Lim

March 7, 2009

WDCAG





(Lai 1988:11)

Cumberland and Environs, 1900s

Incorporated in 1898 as the smallest and westernmost city in Canada. (Cumberland 2003:6)

When coal was king . . .



(CMA 160-001)

British and European workers were paid \$3.30 to \$5.00 a day. The equally diligent and hard-working Chinese and Japanese miners were paid considerably less at \$1.40 to \$1.65 a day. (Cumberland 2003:8)



(CMA 160-038)





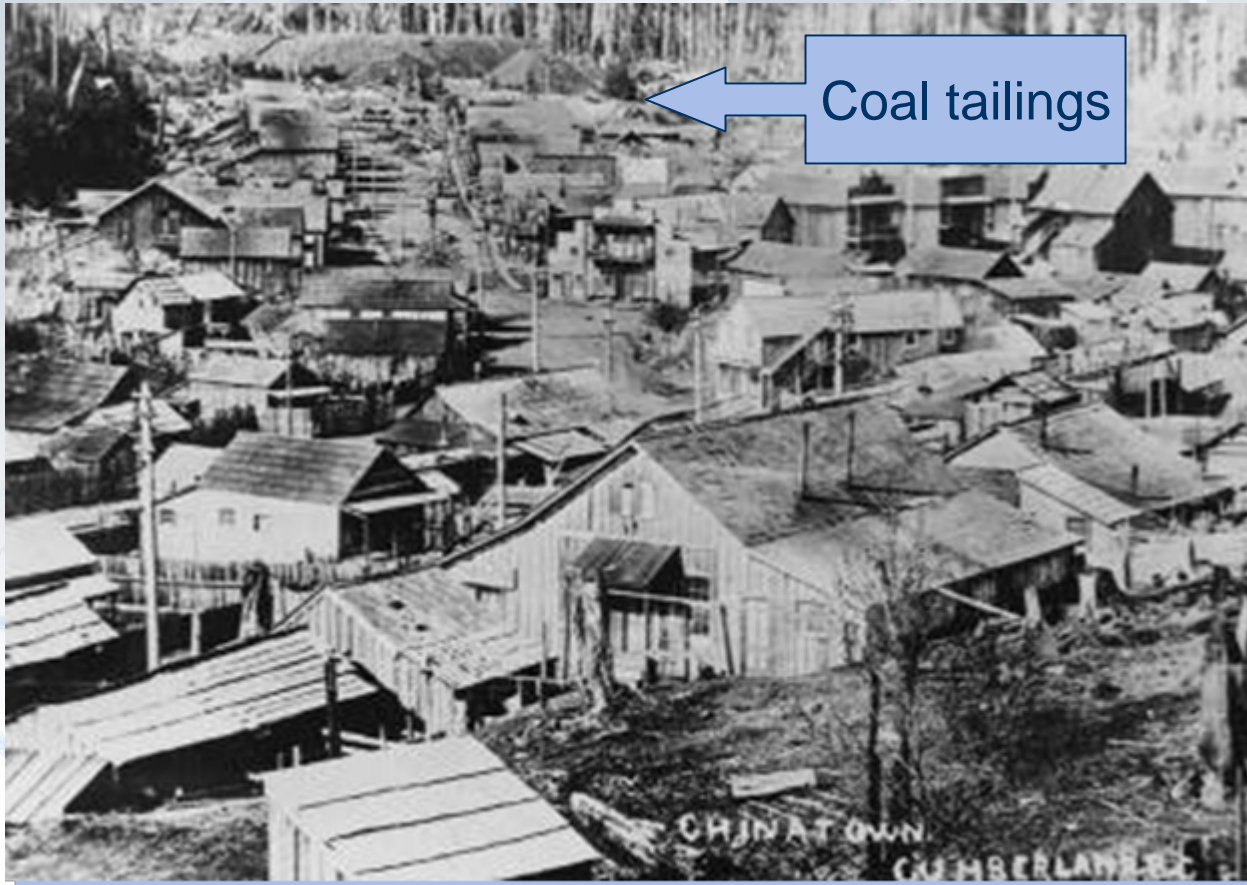
(CMA 040-001)

Philip CP Low (1993:3):

... those were the “good old day,” ... I now look back fondly to the days when I was living in Cumberland Chinatown. It was paradise on earth!



No. 2 Mine in your backyard



(CMA 040-001)



Restrictive Legislation Directed at Chinese Immigrants

1885 Head tax - \$50

1901 Head tax - \$100

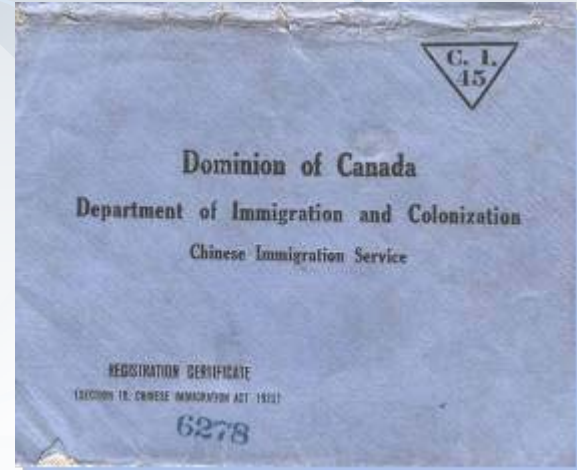
1904 Head tax - \$500

1923 Chinese Immigration (Exclusion)
Act





Section 18, Chinese Immigration Act 1923



Registration Certificate #6278

DOMINION OF CANADA
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION
CHINESE IMMIGRATION SERVICE

No. **6278**

C. I.
45

This is to certify that LIM WONG,


whose photograph is attached hereto, has registered as required by Section 18 of the Chinese Immigration Act, Chapter 38, 13-14 George V.

Dated at Vancouver, B.C.

this 17th day of March, 1924.

A. R. J. J. J.
Controller of Chinese Immigration.

This certificate does not establish legal status in Canada.



The Golden Era of Vancouver 1918-23 Chinatown

Population about 1200

- 5000 Miners
- 150 Cooks & helpers in various Hotels & cafe
- 100 Farmer
- 100 Sawmill & Shingle mill workers
- 100 Storekeepers, Clerk & chef
- 150 Women & children
- 100 Dische or Skidfolks

Business & enterprises

- 24 Chinese grocers
- 5 Butcher Shops
- 5 Sailor Shops
- 4 Barber Shops
- 4 Restaurants (Chinese Food only) ^{Chinese Pastries}
- 1 Cafeteria (English meal)
- 1 shoe maker
- 5 Chinese Drug stores
- 2 Department store (grocery, dry goods, Hardware) _{no Chinese grocery}
- 2 Taxi
- 3 Hand Repairing
- 5 Vegetable peddlers (with farm products)
- 1 Bakery (English Pastries only)
- 5 Confectionery stands (tobacco etc)
- 2 Chinese Theatre with (30 performers each)
- 10 Fan Tan Gambling House
- 8 Rotten Offices
- 2 Quack & Health Club, 1 Dentist, 1 Fortune teller

1 Photographs with studio

Chinatown's Heyday 1918-23

(Courtesy of Shirley Tong)



Male/Female Populations and Sex Ratios of Chinese in Selected BC Communities

Year	Community	Males	Females	M/F Ratio
1921	Vancouver	5790	585	10/1
	Victoria	2938	503	6/1
	Cumberland	802	52	16/1
	Vernon	136	31	4.5/1
	Nanaimo	379	54	7/1
	New Westminster	702	45	17/1
1931	Vancouver	11952	1059	11/1
	Victoria	3192	510	6/1
	New Westminster	561	38	15/1
1941	Vancouver	5973	1201	5/1
	Victoria	2549	488	5/1

(Wickberg 1988:306-307, Table 10)



Creating Memories of Home and Place

Living in Cumberland Chinatown when I was growing up has been a very memorable time of my life. I lived with my grandfather when I was 12 years old until I was 17 years old. [...] [Chinese New Year] was a day when I would stay away from school to enjoy the festivities with my grandparents. [...] Grandfather would make his own floral arrangements for the New Year by gluing pink popcorn on these bare branches.

(Comox Valley resident1 2008)



The first year I came to Canada (1949), I remember visiting Cumberland with my dad and visiting xxx and his wife at their home. The wife was working out in the field. We drove around the area. My uncle told me they had a store there and made tofu. They also had a gambling house. Someone hit the jackpot and the gambling house went under. When my grandfather pass[ed] away (age 60), my grandmother took the whole family back to China.

(Burnaby resident 2008)



A Schoolboy's Memory (ca.1926-27)



(CMA:240-012)



I have fond memories [of] early 1939 in Chinatown. Grandma xxx and I went into the woods to pick wild blackberries. There [were] lots [of] cherries, apples and raspberries too. [...] I used to cut small kindling and rolled his cigarettes and place them into a metal tin so he [one of the older single men] could put them into his shirt pockets.

(Comox Valley resident2 2008)



Cumberland 1960s



(Courtesy of Judith Walker)



I grew up in Cumberland Chinatown in the 1950s but by then the businesses were all closed down. Other than my mother and grandmother, there were only 3 or 4 other women living there. By the late 1950s, my mother was the only woman there and I imagine it was a hard and lonely life for her. She tended to her vegetable gardens and raised 8 children. My father worked in the family store in Courtenay and came home only on Wednesdays (when all stores were closed) and Saturday evenings, returning to work on Sunday afternoons. We moved to Courtenay in the late 1960s.

(Vancouver resident 2008)



A Place of Beginnings



(A. Howe photo, 17 Sept 2005)

Imogene Lim and Ken
Lowe at “entrance” to
Cumberland’s Chinatown

Maintaining Ties to Cumberland



July 8, 2007

Remembering and Honouring



Coal Creek Heritage Park Advisory Committee, 26 January 2009

(Photo courtesy of Dwayne Rourke)



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